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SUBJECT: ASD VERSHBOW BRIEFS TURKS ON MISSILE DEFENSE: GOOD  
RECEPTION, BUT ONLY IN NATO CONTEXT

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey for reason 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

1. (S) ASD Vershbow briefed top Turkish MFA and General Staff officials on details of the proposed U.S. Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA) to European ballistic missile defense and presented Turkey with a request to participate in this effort to protect NATO territory by agreeing to allow a radar and perhaps other assets to be based on Turkish territory. Turkish officials appreciated the U.S. consultative approach and pledged to study the proposal, to consult within its inter agency process and to respond as soon as possible. While Turkish officials made no commitments, the carefully-crafted approach was effective: MFA Undersecretary Sinirlioglu said that Turkey agreed that developing a comprehensive deterrent capability within the NATO context may be the only way to respond to the threat of missile proliferation in the region. TGS officials recognized the value of this approach, but requested more details on how THAAD fire units would complement other air defense capabilities Turkey is considering. MFA officials requested that while the U.S. may inform other Allies that we had made this approach, it would be best for all concerned if the subject remained out of the press. End Summary.

Pushing Turkey to Support New Missile Defense Approach

2. (S) On October 19, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Vershbow traveled to Turkey for meetings with senior officials on missile defense. At the Foreign Ministry, Vershbow and the Ambassador met with MFA Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioglu (second only to the Minister in seniority), Deputy Undersecretary Namik Tan, Deputy Director General for Arms Control and Disarmament Ahmet Muhtar Gun and NATO Department Head Sule Oztunc. At the Turkish General Staff, Vershbow and the Ambassador met first with Deputy Chief of Staff GEN Aslan Guner, who was accompanied by LTG Yalcin Ataman (J5), MG Mehmet Cetin and MG Mehmet Erdogan. After 30 minutes, ASD Vershbow and the Ambassador were invited to meet with GEN Ilker Basbug, Chief of Turkey's General Staff. On October 20, Ambassador and DCM followed up these approaches in separate meetings with PM Erdogan's top foreign policy advisers Hakan Fidan and Ibrahim Kalin.

3. (S) In all of his meetings, ASD Vershbow made a complete presentation on the USG proposal for the Phased, Adaptive Approach based on NSC-cleared talking points. He laid out the rationale behind the policy shift and explained the advantages the PAA would provide for Allies. Vershbow stressed that the PAA supported overall NATO goals by protecting all of NATO territory, and could be connected to a NATO command and control system. He said that the U.S. would seek an Alliance declaration endorsing territorial defense as a NATO mission at the December Ministerial meeting to make clear this was a NATO project. Vershbow explained the

reasons for locating a TPY-2 radar in Turkey, close to the threat area, and outlined the benefits such a radar would provide for Turkey's own defense. Vershbow said that, when final, the U.S. proposal might include THAAD missile systems which would, if appropriate, be placed so as to protect the TPY-2 radar as well as territory and key military installations in Eastern Turkey.

MFA: NATO Deterrent To Missile Proliferation Essential  
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14. (S) At the Foreign Ministry, U/S Sinirlioglu said that Turkey had been following the U.S. nuclear posture review and missile defense review with great interest. Turkey appreciated the transparent approach taken by the U.S. and was pleased that the U.S. was continuing to consult with Allies. He reviewed Turkey's redlines for NATO's missile defense project, which included the "indivisibility of security," full coverage for all Allies and an insistence that the burden, risks and benefits of a missile defense system be shared equally by all Allies.

15. (S) Sinirlioglu said that proliferation of missile and nuclear weapons technology in the region was one of the most important threats to Turkey's security. Turkey saw the development of a missile defense capability to deter such proliferation as vital to its security. Turkey was willing to deepen its cooperation within the context of NATO, Sinirlioglu stated. He quoted FM Davutoglu's comment in response to a query about Turkey's potential acquisition of Patriot missile batteries that "this is not tied to any particular threat country." He said that Turkey's military

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saw it essential to have a "credible, reliable air and missile defense system for all of Turkey's territory."

16. (S) While not identifying Iran as the origin of the threat to Turkey's security, Sinirlioglu said that Iran's nuclear program was a major concern for the region. Turkey welcomed the outcome of the latest meeting of the P5 plus 1. Turkey supported the right of any country to pursue the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Sinirlioglu hailed the U.S. policy of engagement with Iran and said that Turkey was "ready to facilitate dialogue." He expressed Turkey's satisfaction with U.S. - Turkey cooperation on export control and said that Turkey took seriously its responsibilities under relevant UNSCRs. With this preamble, Sinirlioglu made plain that Turkey saw two major threats to security for Turkey and for the broader region:

- Iran with nuclear weapons; and/or
- A military strike against Iran's missile facilities.

17. (S) ASD Vershbow concurred strongly that the U.S. did not want to see a nuclear Iran and that while no option had been taken off the table, the U.S. was focusing on finding a diplomatic solution. He seized the opportunity to underscore how developing the PAA would support Turkey's policy: this system by its inherent nature is defensive, rather than offensive. Sinirlioglu said that Turkey agreed "that developing and consolidating deterrence capability is the only way out of this situation." Vershbow repeated the U.S. desire for this system to have a strong link with NATO and explained that national air defense systems could both benefit from and provide support to the PAA. Sinirlioglu closed the subject by stating that "NATO plays a central role in our foreign policy. We put it above all else."

General Staff: A Political Decision, But PAA Makes Sense  
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18. (S) ASD Vershbow and Ambassador found similar understanding at the Turkish General Staff. DCHOD Guner invited ASD Vershbow and the Ambassador to make their approach directly with CHOD Basbug. Basbug, who had been

considering the issue carefully since National Security Adviser Jones' call over the weekend, acknowledged that a missile defense system in the NATO context would help to address Turkey's regional security concerns. He was quick to point out that the decision to base a missile defense radar on Turkish soil would be a political, not military decision. Basbug asked what the NATO role of the THAAD fire units would be and whether similar units would be based on the territory of other Allies. He was curious about the capabilities of the THAAD fire units, and expressed some concern that the TGS press to acquire Patriot batteries (or another system with similar capability) might lose political support within the GOT if it looked like the THAAD would provide coverage at NATO, not strictly national, expense. The Ambassador said that the systems were complementary, not redundant, and that the U.S. was prepared to send experts to lay out how these capabilities would support Turkey's goals.

¶9. (S) In separate meetings with PM Erdogan's top foreign policy advisers on October 20, Ambassador and DCM provided more concise versions of the approaches made the previous day. Hakan Fidan told DCM that the approach to deter the missile threat rather than to strike targets in Iran seemed more logical. He asked for more specific information on Iran's missile capabilities, particularly on range, accuracy, inventory and nuclear weaponization. He said that a system within the NATO context where not just Turkey was being asked to bear the political burden would be most likely to succeed.

Ibrahim Kalin told the Ambassador that in his view, while the proposal would take some time to study, an approach which would protect Alliance territory with a deterrent capability could win the support of PM Erdogan.

Turkey: Let's Keep This Quiet For Now  
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¶10. (S) MFA officials quizzed us as to the support we were seeking from other Allies. ASD Vershbow told Sinirlioglu that we had already begun consultations with Poland and the Czech Republic, given their previous commitments to host parts of the previous BMD architecture in eastern Europe. Other assets could be sea-based, but we planned to make approaches to "other allies" as well who could serve as host country for the Southern SM-3 site or other elements of the PAA system. While the U.S. could brief Allies at NATO that it had approached Turkey, Sinirlioglu urged that it would be better to keep private the specific nature of our request to locate the TPY-2 radar in Turkey. Vershbow agreed to make no

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mention in the press of his discussions on missile defense in Ankara.

Comment  
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¶11. (S) The Turks are clearly open to the idea of exploring an effective deterrent capability. It is our view that the investment made by senior USG officials in engaging and consulting with Turkey as the PAA matured is paying off. All of the Turks with whom we discussed this issue underscored that success depends on ensuring that this system is in a NATO context. Almost as important as what the Turks said during these consultations was what they did not say: none of the Turks with whom we spoke downplayed the threat to regional stability posed by Iran's nuclear program, nor did they express concern about the lack of protection for Turkish territory.

Action Request  
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¶12. (S) We know that additional briefings about the Phased Adaptive Approach are being prepared and we appreciate that Turkey will be high in the lineup to receive these briefings. We understand, however, that information regarding the

Iranian missile program may already be available. Request information on Iran's missile capabilities and inventory to respond to the PM's Foreign Policy Adviser query. Also request information to respond to CHOD Gen Basbug's query regarding how a THAAD fire unit would complement, rather than make redundant, a national air defense system which would include Patriot missile batteries.

¶13. (U) ASD Vershbow cleared this telegram.

JEFFREY

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